a DCT block classifier coupled to the foreground extractor which determines which DCT blocks of at least one of the images contain a threshold amount of foreground information; and

an encoder coupled to the DCT block classifier which encodes the DCT blocks having the threshold amount of foreground information with a first high level of quantization and which encodes the DCT blocks having less than the threshold amount of foreground information as background information at a second lower quantization level relative to said first high level of quantization, wherein at least a majority of a bandwidth is encoded at the first high quantization level, and said encoder provides bit stream information for decoding of both the high level of quantization and lower level of quantization that are encoded .
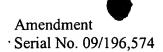
4. (Twice Amended) An image processing device, comprising:

an input which receives a stereo pair of images;

a foreground extractor which detects foreground pixel information from the stereo pair of images; and

an encoder coupled to the foreground extractor which encodes the foreground pixel information at a first high level of quantization and which encodes background pixel information at a second lower level of quantization relative to said first high level of quantization, wherein at least a majority of a bandwidth is encoded at the first high level of quantization,

wherein said encoder provides bit stream information for decoding of both the high level of quantization and lower level of quantization that are encoded.

---

7. (Twice Amended) An image processing system, comprising:

a stereo pair of cameras for taking a stereo pair of images;

a foreground extractor which detects foreground pixel information from the stereo pair of images; and
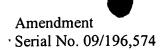
an encoder coupled to the foreground extractor which encodes the foreground pixel information at a first high level of quantization and which encodes background pixel information at a second lower level of quantization relative to said first high level of quantization; wherein at least a majority of a bandwidth is encoded at the first high quantization level, wherein said encoder provides bit stream information for decoding of both the high level of quantization and lower level of quantization that are encoded.

8. (Twice Amended) A method of encoding a stereo pair of images, comprising:

receiving the stereo pair of images;

extracting foreground information from the stereo pair of images; and

encoding the foreground information at a first high quantization level and encoding background information of the stereo pair of images at a second lower quantization level relative to said first high level of quantization; wherein at least a majority of a bandwidth is encoded at the first high quantization level, wherein said encoding step includes providing bit stream information for decoding of both the high level of quantization and lower level of quantization.

11. (Twice Amended) Computer-executable process steps to process image data from a stereo pair of images, the computer-executable process steps being stored on a computer-readable medium and comprising:

a foreground extracting step to detect foreground pixel information from the stereo pair of images; and

an encoding step for encoding foreground pixel information of at least one image at a first high quantization level and for encoding background pixel information of the at least one image at a second lower quantization relative to said first high level of quantization, wherein said encoding step provides bit stream information for decoding of both the high level of quantization and lower level of quantization;

wherein at least a majority of a bandwidth is encoded at the first high quantization level.